GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:249
ANSWERED ON:10.08.2005
ILL EFFECTS OF JUNK FOOD
Chandel Shri Suresh

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government is aware that junk food is fast gaining popularity in the metropolitan cities and people are getting quickly attracted towards it;

(b) if so, whether the food experts world over have expressed concern at the increasing consumption of junk food;

(c) whether various researches have proved that a large number of children and youths are falling victims to lethal diseases as a result of consumption of such food;

(d) if so, whether the Government proposes to take steps to check the expanding junk food culture and also to save the people from its adverse impact;

(e) if so, by when; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. ANBUMANI RAMADOSS)

(a)to(f): A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 249 FOR 10TH AUGUST, 2005

There is no specific definition for junk food. The pharse `junk food` is used to denote such food which have high levels of calories and have little enzyme producing vitamins and minerals. When such food is consumed, the body is required to produce its own enzymes to convert these empty calories into usable energy. This is not desirable as this enzymes producing function in our body should be reserved for the performance of vital metabolic reactions.

There is an increasing trend particularly among school children and adolescent population to consume `junk food` which is rich in calories but low in nutritive value. However, there is no data on the extent of consumption of junk foods.

There is a concern world over regarding increasing consumption of highly refined foods with only energy and little or no vitamins and minerals.

There are studies to indicate that there is a positive correlation between consumption of foods with empty calories and chronic degenerative diseases as well as hypertension, obesity, cardio vascular problems and glucose intolerance. A study conducted by All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) - Department of Science & Technology (DST) trial - in 2002 found that the consumption of junk food is increasing in schools and adolescent population. The same study has shown that this trend and associated life style factors in urban adolescent and young adult population has resulted increase of non - communicable diseases among the young population.

The need for education of general public to avoid junk food has increased and efforts are being made by Government, nutritionists and dieticians to make people aware of their harmful effects. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has also prepared some IEC material advising avoidance of junk food by all age groups of the population. These materials have been circulated to all the States and are also displayed and distributed during ` health melas` organized by this Ministry. The National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) has developed dietary guidelines for Indians, where it has been suggested that ready to eat foods should be consumed judiciously and free sugar should be used sparingly.